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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, FR, MNUC, PARM

SUBJECT: THE FRENCH TACTICAL NUCLEAR MISSILE "PLUTON"

REFS: A. PARIS 16887; B. PARIS 18996

SUMMARY. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HOPES TO EQUIP SIX REGIMENTS WITH SIX TACTICAL NUCLEAR "PLUTON" MISSILES EACH BY 1978. IT IS BELIEVED IN SOME FRENCH CIRCLES THAT THERE WAS AN ORIGINAL INTENTION TO INSTALL ONE OR MORE OF THESE REGIMENTS IN THE FRG, POSSIBLY AT HESSE. WHATEVER THE FACTS, POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THAT EVENTUALITY IS MOUNTING IN FRANCE. AT THE SAME TIME FRG VIEWS WITH SOME ALARM THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROXIMITY JUST OUTSIDE HER BORDERS OF THESE SHORT-RANGE WEAPONS. THE PROBLEM IS COMPLICATED BY THE WORRY PREVALENT IN FRANCE THAT GOF WOULD BE GIVING UP ITS MILITARY SOVEREIGNTY AND BY THE FEAR THAT FRANCE WOULD BE REINTEGRATING HERSELF INTO NATO'S MILITARY COMMAND BY THE SIDE DOOR. THE SOVIET UNION IS ALSO OPPOSED TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF PLUTONS OUTSIDE FRANCE. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING WILL BE HARD PUT TO RESOLVE THIS DILEMMA -- HOW DOES HE RECONCILE THE WISHES OF A NATIONAL ELECTORATE GENERALLY OPPOSED TO PLUTONS' DEPLDYMENT IN GERMANY WITH HIS DECLARED AIM OF BRINGING FRANCE POLITICALLY CLOSER TO THE FRG IN PARTICULAR, AND TO "EUROPE" IN GENERAL (SOME OFFICIALS IN FRG STRONGLY ADVOCATE PLUTONS IN GERMANY)? END SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND: SINCE THE MAILLY REGIMENT WAS FIRST EQUIPPED WITH "PLUTON" MISSILES FIFTEEN MONTHS AGO, THE QUESTION OF EXACTLY HOW THE MISSILES WOULD BE DEPLOYED HAS BEEN A SUBJECT OF INCREASING POLITICAL INTEREST IN FRANCE. THE ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO HAVE SIX REGIMENTS ULTIMATELY EQUIPPED WITH PLUTON, A SHORT RANGE (CIRCA 65 MILES) TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPON MOUNTED ON THE HIGHLY MOBILE AMX-30 TANK CHASSIS. SOME FRENCH POLITICIANS CLAIM THAT ONE OR MORE OF THESE PLUTON EQUIPPED REGIMENTS WERE TO HAVE BEEN STATIONED IN GERMANY. OVER THE PAST YEAR THERE HAS BEEN MOUNTING OPPOSITION ON ALL SIDES TO PLUTON'S LEAVING FRENCH SOIL. SOME FRG OFFICIALS ON THE OTHER HAND ARE REPORTEDLY

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ANXIOUS TO HAVE THE WEAPONS STATIONED IN GERMANY BECAUSE OF PLUTON'S SHORT RANGE. WERE FRG AND GOF ALLIED IN A GROUND WAR AGAINST WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES, THE MISSILES WOULD FALL ON GERMAN SOIL IN THE EVENT THEY REMAIN STATIONED IN FRANCE. IN JUNE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE HELD AT FOUGERAIS, A MILITARY CAMP LOCATED IN EASTERN FRANCE, 45 KILOMETERS FROM THE FRG BORDER AND 10 FROM THE SWISS. THE WHOLE LOCAL FRENCH POLITICAL SPECTRUM WAS

REPRESENTED IN THE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE INTENDED
INSTALLATION OF PLUTON MISSILES AT FOUGERAIS. FRG AND
SWISS CIVILIANS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROTEST. ALL OF
THESE ISSUES WERE BROUGHT TO THE FOREGROUND IN THE JULY
14 INDEPENDENCE DAY MILITARY PARADE IN PARIS, WHEN THE
MAILLY REGIMENT AND ITS SIX PLUTONS WERE THE STARS OF
THE SHOW.

2. THE PROBLEM: FEW FRENCH ARE OPPOSED TO THE EXISTEN-
CE OF PLUTON PER SE. FOR THE MOMENT THE PROBLEM SEEMS
TO CENTER AROUND THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN DEFENSE.
IF THE MISSILES STAY IN FRANCE, THEY WILL REMAIN UNDER
EXCLUSIVE FRENCH CONTROL. IF THEY ARE DEPLOYED IN FRG,
THREE OPTIONS PRESENT THEMSELVES: ONE, THEY WOULD STAY
UNDER FRENCH CONTROL; TWO, THEY WOULD BE PLACED UNDER
JOINT FRENCH/GERMAN CONTROL; THREE, THEY WOULD FALL

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UNDER NATO CONTROL. AS FAR AS THE FRENCH ARE CONCERNED, THE LATTER TWO OPTIONS ARE EQUALLY UNATTRACTIVE SINCE IN BOTH CASES GOF WOULD SURRENDER SOME MEASURE OF INDEPENDENT CONTROL. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE IS LITTLE BELIEF IN FRANCE THAT FRG WOULD ALLOW GOF TO MAINTAIN EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OF PLUTONS WERE THEY STATIONED ON GERMAN SOIL. FURTHER COMPLICATING THE ISSUE IS THE FACT THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS IN THE PAST WARNED FRANCE NOT TOO OBLIQUELY THAT DEPLOYMENT OF PLUTONS IN FRG WOULD COMPLICATE FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND POSSIBLY NECESSITATE SOME KIND OF RESPONSE FROM WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES.

3. DOMESTIC POLITICS: FOR VARIOUS REASONS THE FATE OF PLUTON IS A COMMON GROUND ON WHICH MOST MAJOR PARTIES CAN MEET. THE COMMUNIST POSITION IS CLEAR: NO PLUTONS OUTSIDE OF FRANCE, BECAUSE THEY CAN ONLY BE INTENDED TO MENACE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES. THE GAULLIST POSITION, LED BY THE OLD PARTY-LINER MICHEL DEBRE, FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE, IS JUST AS UNEQUIVOCAL: NO PLUTONS OUTSIDE OF FRANCE, BECAUSE FRANCE WOULD THEREBY BE TAKING A STEP CLOSER TO REJOINING NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY

COMMAND, TO RENOUNCING HER POLITICAL AND MILITARY SOVEREIGNTY. IN FACT, DEBRE RECENTLY ADDRESSED A STRONGLY-WORDED LETTER ON THE SUBJECT OF PLUTON TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A LETTER THAT WAS PLAYED UP IN THE FRENCH PRESS. THE SOCIALIST POSITION, AS ANNOUNCED BY MITTERRAND, IS SOMEWHAT MORE EQUIVOCAL. PS POLITICAL/MILITARY EXPERT, CHARLES HERNU, ADVOCATES

A STRONG NATIONALLY-CONTROLLED FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE AND SEEMS WILLING TO TOLERATE PLUTON EMPLACEMENT IN THE FRG. A POWERFUL FACTION OF THE PARTY, LED BY DEPUTY JEAN-PIERRE COT, OPPOSES PLUTONS OUTSIDE OF FRANCE BECAUSE IT OPPOSES THE FRENCH NUCLEAR PROGRAM. THE PARTY'S FAR LEFT, THE CERES, TAKES AN ATTITUDE WHICH CLOSELY RESEMBLES THAT OF COMMUNIST SECRETARY-GENERAL GEORGES MARCHAIS, WHO AS FAR BACK AS JUNE 1972, WAS ALREADY ACCUSING MITTERRAND OF "LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN TO A 'EUROPEAN' TACTICAL ATOMIC FORCE." THE CENTRISTS (REFORMISTS) HAVE, IN KEEPING WITH THEIR STANCE ON MANY
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MAJOR ISSUES, NO DEFINABLE VIEWPOINT ON THE PROBLEM, THOUGH IT CAN BE SAFELY ASSUMED THAT THOSE CENTRISTS, WHO LEAN TOWARDS THE LEFT OR TOWARDS THE UDR, TEND RESPECTIVELY TOWARDS THE VIEWS OF EACH. THE GREAT QUESTION MARK REMAINS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND HIS INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY. THERE IS SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE PERSONALLY ADVOCATES THE DEPLOYMENT OF PLUTONS IN FRG. GISCARD KNOWS THAT ANY FRENCH DEFENSE PLAN MUST TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACT THAT THE FRG AND A LARGE PORTION OF THE NATO COMMAND LIE BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE WESTERN BORDERS OF THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES. SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE ENTIRELY IN KEEPING WITH GOF'S GENERAL POLICY OF "REINTEGRATING" HERSELF WITH EUROPE AND, BY EXTENSION, THE US. THERE IS FURTHERMORE SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT, IN SPITE OF FOREIGN MINISTER SAUVAGNARGUES' VIGOROUS DENIAL BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON JUNE 27 (REF A), AND AGAIN IN A NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR INTERVIEW (21/7/75), THERE DOES EXIST CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF PLUTONS IN FRG, EVEN IF ONLY IN THE EVENT OF WAR. IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME, IN VIEW OF THE WIDE PRESS COVERAGE GIVEN IN RECENT WEEKS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A PLUTON DEPLOYMENT IN FRG, THAT SOME PLANNING AND

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SOME DISCUSSIONS MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN GOF AND
FRG CIVILIAN AND/OR MILITARY OFFICIALS.

4. CONCLUSION AND COMMENT: WILL ANY PLUTONS MOVE TO
GERMANY IN THE NEAR FUTURE? PROBABLY NOT. WITH A

MAJORITY OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE OPPOSED, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY GISCARD WOULD RISK SUCH A MOVE POLITICALLY. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DE FACTO UDR (GAULLIST) AND INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN COALITION ARE SOMETIMES BUMPY. WERE GISCARD OPENLY TO DECLARE HIMSELF IN FAVOR OF PLUTON DEPLOYMENT IN GERMANY, HE WOULD BE RISKING INCREASED FRICTION, PERHAPS EVEN RUPTURE, WITH THE GAULLISTS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WOULD NOT WANT TO STIR UP RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS BEFORE HIS VISIT TO THE USSR PLANNED FOR THIS OCTOBER.

5. CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, FEW CIVILIANS SEEM TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE HIGH MANEUVERABILITY OF THE AMX-30 THAT BEARS PLUTON. CAPABLE OF A TOP SPEED OF FIFTY MPH, IT CAN BE MOVED AT HIGH SPEED IN TIME OF HOSTILITY. IN A JULY 18 FIGARO ARTICLE POLITICAL THEORIST RAYMOND ARON POINTED OUT THAT EXACTLY BECAUSE OF ITS MANEUVERABILITY PLUTON COULD SERVE EQUALLY WELL IN EITHER FRANCE OR GERMANY. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE SUBJECT MAY BE RAISED WHEN SCHMIDT AND GISCARD MEET ON THE 26TH AND 27TH OF THIS MONTH. IF SO, THE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT ANY FIRM DECISION WILL BE PUT OFF BY THE FRENCH PRESIDENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, SCHMIDT, FULLY AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT A PUBLIC DECLARATION WOULD CAUSE AT THIS TIME, MAY PREFER TO LET THE MATTER LIE. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE GISCARD/SCHMIDT MEETING, THE POSSIBILITY OF STATIONING PLUTON REGIMENTS IN GERMANY IS CERTAIN TO REMAIN A DELICATE SUBJECT OF DEBATE BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND EXTERNALLY.
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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 23 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
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Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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